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SIPDIS

H-PASS  
SENSITIVE

STATE PLEASE PASS TO REP. ROYCE'S STAFF

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR CODEL ROYCE VISIT TO TURKEY

REF: SECSTATE 293703

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1. (SBU) Summary: Your CODEL arrives in Ankara at a time when Iraq and resolution of the PKK/KADEK question remain the focus of the US-Turkish relationship. Turks are seized with two Iraq-related issues: whether the U.S. will work out with the Interim Governing Council the eventual deployment of Turkish troops to Iraq as part of the Stabilization Force, and whether the U.S. will move against PKK/KADEK terrorists in northern Iraq. Senior GOT officials including PM Erdogan, as well as our contacts with ordinary citizens across the country, have indicated that concrete progress by the U.S. on PKK/KADEK will ease Turkish suspicions that the U.S. favors the Kurds in northern Iraq over our relations with Turkey. GOT tells us it is committed to finding a comprehensive solution on Cyprus, but continues to emphasize flaws in the Annan plan. GOT remains open in principle to improving relations with Armenia, and has inaugurated Istanbul-Yerevan civil air flights but refuses to open its border with Armenia before Armenia recognizes the border. Turkey has issued positive statements in support of the Middle East Roadmap and has exchanged a number of high-level visits with Israel recently, but the Turkish populace sympathizes with the Palestinians. Turkey cautiously supports USG policy objectives in Syria and Iran.

2. (SBU) The governing Justice and Development (AK) Party came to power with an overwhelming Parliamentary majority in November 2002 and continues to pass democratic reforms for their own sake and in pursuit of Turkey's EU candidacy. However, elements within the Turkish establishment, asserting emotionally that AK is a radical Islamist party, continue to oppose AK at every turn. On the economic front, two years of sound fiscal/monetary policy and structural reforms, the rapid and successful conclusion of the Iraq war, expected U.S. financial assistance, and unprecedented IMF support have combined to bring down inflation and interest rates, restore modest growth, and create some hope that Turkey can work its way out from under a high public debt burden. The government has an opportunity in the coming months to win the economy some much-needed breathing room, but this will require committed implementation of IMF-supported reforms as well as wise conduct of foreign policy. End summary.

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IRAQ  
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3. (SBU) By a comfortable margin -- 358 to 183, with two abstentions -- the Turkish Parliament on October 7 granted the GOT broad authority to send troops to Iraq if the GOT considers conditions favorable. Since the vote, GOT officials have expressed to us their frustration with public statements by elements in Iraq and Turkey opposing a deployment of Turkish troops. The Turks are looking to the U.S. to silence the critics and build support for a Turkish deployment. The recent car bomb attack on the Turkish Embassy in Baghdad has heightened public concerns about the risks Turkish troops will face in Iraq, but the government has been undeterred by the event.

4. (U) There has been a concerted effort on the part of the GOT to shift its Iraq policy away from one centered on ethnicity (Turkmen and Kurd) and northern Iraq towards a more central, Baghdad-oriented policy based primarily on contributing to stability through trade, humanitarian assistance and commercial opportunities for Turkish businesses. However, GOT efforts have not found much

traction with the military, the press or the public, which remain focused on northern Iraq. The Turks have taken a number of concrete steps in humanitarian assistance and reconstruction since Secretary Powell's April visit to Turkey. The World Food Program (WFP) continues to ship considerable quantities of food through Turkey, and Turkey is also the world's biggest supplier (in value terms) to WFP. The GOT also has supported the U.S. military's efforts to establish a ground line of communications (GLOC) here to re-supply U.S. forces in Iraq. Turkey recently facilitated a Turkish company's export of electricity to Iraq, continues to support fuel barter deals to supply essential energy supplies to the Iraqi people, and has offered some commercial/aid deals that Washington and CPA are considering.

15. (SBU) The Turks also remain very focused on the presence of PKK/KADEK terrorists in northern Iraq. Parliament recently passed a "re-integration" law allowing non-leadership members of the PKK/KADEK to return voluntarily to Turkey. Results of the law have been disappointing so far. The Turks are looking to the USG to implement our commitment to eliminate the PKK/KADEK threat from Iraq. State's Counter Terrorism Chief Amb. Black was in Ankara October 2 to discuss PKK/KADEK and agreed with the Turks on a plan of action using the full range of statecraft tools to eliminate the PKK/KADEK threat. The Turks also remain disturbed by what they consider to be Kurdish (vice U.S. or Iraqi central authority) control of the Iraqi side of the Turkish-Iraq border and a perceived U.S. favoritism of Kurds over Turkish interests. The U.S and GOT are attempting to put behind us hard feelings from a July 4 incident, in which U.S. forces arrested Turkish troops believed to be working to foment instability. That event and the Turks' perception that we mishandled it (although Chief of the General Staff Ozkok subsequently transferred the two Turkish generals responsible for Turkish special forces in Iraq short of tour) are likely to linger in the background of the relationship.

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CYPRUS  
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16. (SBU) The AK Government states that it remains committed to using the Annan III Plan as the basis for finding a solution on Cyprus, both for domestic political reasons and its interest in promoting Turkey's EU candidacy. However, the Turkish establishment's long support for Denktash, his rejection of the Annan plan, and Denktash supporters in Ankara retard progress towards a comprehensive solution. Much will depend on the government's willingness to take on this issue between now and spring 2004, when Cyprus' EU membership becomes effective. AK owes nothing politically to "TRNC" leader Denktash and is thus interested in promoting transparent and fair parliamentary elections in the North in December. No matter what the outcome, the elections, which have become a de facto referendum on a comprehensive solution, will profoundly affect the likelihood of a settlement before May.

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ARMENIA  
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17. (SBU) The AK government is much less wedded than its predecessors to Azerbaijan's ruling Aliyev family. However, continued GOT linkage of normalization of relations with Armenia to improvements in Nagorno-Karabakh has thwarted progress. The GOT also maintains that it cannot establish normal relations until Armenia recognizes its border with Turkey. GOT and AK party officials tell us they recognize the potential trade and development benefits to Turkey from opening the border. However, passage of any Armenian genocide language, even by only one chamber of Congress, will set progress back significantly.

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MIDDLE EAST  
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18. (SBU) Turkey prides itself on its good relations with both Israelis and Palestinians. While it supports the U.S.-sponsored Road Map, Turkey is leery of getting too far ahead of a Turkish populace that generally sympathizes with the Palestinian side. On Syria and Iran, Turkey argues that Turkey: 1) lives in a rough neighborhood and has an interest in minimizing friction with its neighbors; and 2) shares the same values and goals in the Middle East as the U.S. (stability, democracy and prosperity). GOT officials have recently indicated to us their belief that Syria is currently

engaged in a gradual process of democratization, which they believe should be encouraged. In this regard, Foreign Minister Gul delivered a call for democracy and reform in the Islamic world at the June OIC Summit in Tehran.

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DOMESTIC POLITICAL SCENE  
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9. (SBU) The governing AK Party, which came to power with an overwhelming Parliamentary majority in November 2002, continues to pursue democratic and political reform (para 12). Meanwhile, AK's principle challengers -- the opposition CHP and the xenophobic Genc Party -- have lost momentum. AK insists its substantial and pathbreaking democratic reform packages demonstrate it is wedded to democracy and strong relations with the EU and U.S. However, most people in the Turkish establishment question AK's sincerity and remain concerned about its religious roots. There are also questions about AK's ability to field an experienced and competent bureaucratic team. Turkey's generals are keen to protect their status as Guardians of the (Kemalist) Republic and the version of "secularism" that has prevailed in Turkey. They, and much of the status quo forces in the State, assert AK is a challenge to the founding ideology of Ataturk's Turkey; AK in turn says that its "secular" opponents have hijacked Ataturk's intentions and are responsible for the stagnation in Turkey's political, economic, and social development.

10. (SBU) Both the AK Government and the Turkish General Staff handled the run-up to Operation Iraqi Freedom badly; neither showed leadership in the debate about whether Turkey should participate in a stabilization force for Iraq. Apart from its Iraq policy, the government has gained better footing since PM Erdogan took over in March 2003. The PM demonstrated political leadership and management in Parliament's Oct. 7 decision to approve the Iraq troop deployment, and Erdogan consolidated his control of AK at the party's October 12 convention.

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POLITICAL REFORM PROCESS  
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11. (SBU) In its first eleven months in power, the AK Government has passed a series of democratization and political reforms in the context of EU harmonization. Turkey is garnering praise from the EU, which should decide by Dec. 2004 whether to begin formal accession talks with Turkey. The reform packages expand freedom of expression including mother tongue (i.e. Kurdish language) rights, crack down on torture, and raise the relative authority of elected civilians vis-a-vis the military. There are questions, however, about whether the AK government will be able to implement these reforms rapidly, particularly given the resistance from those in the judiciary, military and other elements of the state which are content with the status quo and suspicious of AK, the EU and the U.S. The AK Government has also launched an anti-corruption drive that appears far more comprehensive than any conducted by previous governments. Nevertheless, many Turks wonder how far AK will take its anti-corruption effort, including against allegations of corruption in the military and within AK itself.

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THE ECONOMY  
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12. (SBU) Two years of sound fiscal/monetary policy and structural reforms, the rapid and successful conclusion of the Iraq war, expected U.S. financial assistance, and unprecedented IMF support have combined to bring down inflation and interest rates, restore modest growth, and create some hope that Turkey can work its way out from under a high public debt burden. The GOT has an opportunity, between now and the end of the year, to build on this momentum and thus push the economy away from the financial precipice on which it has been perched for the past three years. This will require the government, which so far has implemented the IMF recovery program with muted enthusiasm, to complete the next IMF review rapidly, proceed with scheduled privatizations, win a positive EU report in October, and improve the environment for foreign direct investment. Failure to take advantage of this opportunity will not necessarily mean another crisis, but will leave the economy extremely vulnerable to external or internal shocks and undermine the potential for prosperity. In late

September, the U.S. and Turkey signed an agreement under which the USG will provide \$8.5 billion on low-interest loans to support Turkey's economic reform efforts. Money under the agreement could begin flowing once the GOT cabinet and President have approved the package.

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CHILD CUSTODY  
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113. (SBU) Turkey has been a signatory to the Hague Convention since August 2000. Since that time, we are unaware of any children being returned to any country without the agreement of the abducting parent. There are systemic problems: 1) Courts meet for 10 minutes monthly on an individual case and do not focus on Hague issues; 2) judges do not understand the Hague Convention requirement and rule on custody rather than Hague issues, thereby requiring a lengthy appeal process; 3) the legal process lasts between 2-3 years total; and 4) the Ministry of Interior does not provide adequate support to the unit charged with locating children and parents involved in abduction cases. The US currently has four applications pending, each for return of one child to the US. In one case the child has now been in Turkey over a year and a half due to the slow court process and the judge used that delay to rule the child should stay in Turkey. In another case, the Government of Turkey has been unable to locate a child abducted to Turkey in October 2002. Due to physical abuse by the abducting father, the Turkish court ordered the child returned to the mother immediately. The Interior Ministry places a low priority on these types of cases and has been unable to locate the child.

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TURKISH MEDIA  
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114. (U) Turkey has a lively and colorful media scene. Reporting often includes absolute fantasy passed as fact. Despite the large number of newspapers, however, readership is not as broad and deep as might be expected. Newspapers are influential in major cities but not far beyond. Most Turks get their news from television. Except for government-owned TRT television, all television stations in Turkey, like the print media, are owned by either individual businessmen or conglomerates. The press will be interested in your visit and seek comments at a number of venues.

115. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

EDELMAN